

# The Land of Broken Promises

By DAN COOLIDGE.

Author of

"The Fighting Fool," "Hidden Waters," "The Texican," etc.

Illustration by DON J. LAVIN

"But wait!" she ran on, her eyes flashing. "Perhaps we are not so eager to defend our government as you have a new one every year. But if the men who are gathering in Chihuahua invade our country, you will find that as Sonorans those men will fight to the death."

"You laugh because you do not understand. But why should we Sonorans fight side by side with the federals and rurales? Are they not the soldiers of Diaz, who have simply changed to another master? That Manuel del Rey was last year hunting down Maderistas in the hills; now he is fighting for Madero! And tomorrow? Who can say?"

She shrugged her shoulders scornfully, and Hooker perceived that she was in earnest in her dislike of the dashing captain, but prudence warned him to say nothing if he would escape being drawn into the quarrel.

"No!" she went on, after an expectant pause, "let the rurales pursue these bandits—they are hired for that purpose! But if Orpoco and Salazar join this ladron, Bernardo Bravo, and seek to capture our towns, then, Señor Amerianno, you will see real war and men fighting to the death! Ah, you laugh again—you are a Texan and judge us Sonorans by the cowardly Chihuahuans—but it is the truth. And I, for one," she added naively, "would be almost glad to have war. Do you know why? To see if you would really defend me!"

She smiled, looking frankly into his eyes, and Bud blushed to the roots of his hair, but once again he held his peace.

"What, señor!" she bantered; "you do not speak? Surely, then, your friend De Lancey was wrong when he said you would save me! For look, Mr. Hooker, I am promised to marry dear Phil; but how can I manage that when Manuel del Rey is watching me? It is impossible, is it not?"

"Seems so," muttered Bud, and in the back of his head he began to think quickly. Here was the fountainhead of his misfortunes, and if she had her way she would lay all his plans in ruins—and even then not marry Phil. In fact, from the light way she spoke, he sensed that she did not intend to marry him. Her grudge was against Manuel del Rey who drove away all her lovers.

"Well," he ventured, "there's no rush, I reckon—Phil's enlisted for five years."

"Ha!" she cried contemptuously; "and do you think he will serve? No! At a word from me he will flee to the border and I shall join him in the United States!"

"What?" demanded Bud; "Phil desert?"

In a moment he saw what such a move would mean to him—to Kruger and the Eagle Tail—and he woke suddenly from his calm.

"Here now," he said, scowling as he

to keep from being executed, and—that's about all!"

"And not a word about me?" "Yes," admitted Bud; "he said he'd try to put up with it—on account of you—and—"

"What?" she entreated, taking him beseechingly by the coat.

"Well," stammered Hooker, shifting his feet and looking away, "he told me to kinder take care of you—while he was gone."

"Ah!" she breathed, still standing close to him, "and will you do it?"

"I reckon so," said Bud, "if we have any trouble."

"But I'm in trouble now!" she cried. "I'm watched—I can't get away—and I'm afraid!"

"Afraid of what?" he demanded.

"Of him!" she answered, her voice breaking; "of Manuel del Rey!"

"Well," replied Hooker bluntly, "I've got nothing to do with that—I can't



"But I'm in trouble now!" she cried.

Interfere in your love affairs—but if they're war and they try to take the town, you can count on me."

"Oh, thank you," she said, bowing satirically. "And do you expect a war?"

"Not with that bunch of hombres!" returned Bud, winking a disparaging hand toward the noise of the shouting. At this she broke down and laughed. Evidently she was not so fearful of discovery after all.

"You forget, sir," she said, "that I am a Mexican!"

Then, as he failed to show any signs of contrition, she changed her mood again.

saw that she was laughing at him, "you've made me and Phil enough trouble. You let that boy alone, savvy?"

He stooped toward her as he spoke, fixing her with masterful eyes that had thinned many a bad horse and man, and she shrank away instinctively. Then she glanced at him shyly and edged over toward the open door.

"I will do what I please, Mr. Hooker," she returned, balancing on the verge of flight.

"All right," Bud came back; "but don't you call me in on it. You've made a fool of Phil—I suppose you'd like to get me, too. Then your father would grab our mine."

"What do you mean?" she challenged, turning back upon him.

"I mean this," responded Hooker warmly. "Phil holds the title to our mine. If he deserts he loses his Mexican citizenship and his claim is no good. But you don't need to think that your father will get the mine then, because he'll have to whip me first!"

"O-ho!" she sneered; "so that is what you are thinking of? You are a true gringo, Mr. Hooker—always thinking about the money!"

"Yes," returned Bud, "and even at that I believe your old man will best me!"

She laughed again, with sudden capriciousness, and stood tapping the floor with her foot.

"Ah, I see," she said at length, gazing at him reproachfully; "you think I am working for my father. You think I got poor Phil into all this trouble in order to cheat him of his mine. But let me tell you, Señor Gringo," she cried with sudden fire, "that I did not! I have nothing to do with my father and his schemes. But if you do not trust me—"

She turned dramatically to go, but when Hooker made no effort to stay her she returned once more to the attack.

"No," she said, "it was because he was an American—because he was brave—that I put my faith in Phil. These Mexican men are cowards—they are afraid to stand up and fight! But Philip dared to make love to me—he dared to sing to me at night—and when Manuel del Rey tried to stop him he stood up and made a fight!"

"Ah, that is what I admire—a man who is brave! And let me tell you, Señor Hooker, I shall always love your friend! If I could run away I would marry him tomorrow; but this cur, Manuel del Rey, stands in the way. Even my own father is against me. But I don't care—I don't care what happens—only do not think that I am not your friend!"

She paused now and glanced at him shyly, and as her eloquent eyes met his own Bud felt suddenly that she was sincere. The gnawing and corrosive doubts that had eaten at his heart fell away, and he saw her now in her true beauty, with no uneasy thoughts of treachery to poison his honest love.

"I believe you, lady," he said, "and I'm glad to know you," he added, taking off his hat and bowing awkwardly. "Anything I can do for you, don't hesitate to ask for it—only I can't go against my pardners on this mine."

He bowed again and retreated toward the door, but she followed him impulsively.

"Shake hands," she said, holding out both her own, "and will you help me?"

"Sure!" answered Bud, and as her soft fingers closed on his he took them gently, for fear that he might crush them and never know.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

A month of weary waiting followed that day of days in Fortuna, and still there was no word from Phil. Bernardo Bravo and his rebel raiders passed through the mountains to the east, and news came of heavy fighting in Chihuahua. Don Cipriano Aragon moved his family back to his hacienda and Gracia became only a dream.

Then, one day, as Hooker and the Yaqui were industriously pounding out gold, a messenger came out from town with a telegram in his hand.

Up in God's name. No chance to hold mine Kruger says quit—P.

"No I'll be 'sarned if I do!" muttered Bud. Then he sat down to think. "Amigo," he said to the Yaqui, "are you a Mexican citizen? Can you get title to mine?"

"Me a Mexican?" repeated Amigo, tapping himself on the chest. "No, señor! Seguro que no!"

"All right then," observed Bud bitterly, "there goes nothing—nowhere! I'll turn Mexican myself!"

He passed the messenger on the way to town, took out his first papers as a citizen, picked up the mineral agent's expert on the way back, and located the Eagle Tail in his own name. Before riding back to camp he wired to Kruger:

Have turned Mex. and relocated claim. HOOKER.

It was his last card, and he did not expect to win by it. Fate had been against him from the start, and he could see his finish, but his nature drove him to fight on. All that Aragon had to do now was to have him summoned for military service, and Del Rey would do the rest.

Then he would take over the mine. A man of quality—or so it seemed—between Aragon and his mine stood the Texas blood. Hooker had been crowded to the wall, and he was mad enough to fight.

The news of De Lancey's desertion followed quickly after his flight—it came over the federal wires in a report to Manuel del Rey—but by the time it got to Aragon that gentleman was too late. Three days into camp the next day—Aragon and the captain of the rurales—and at the first glimpse of that hated uniform Amigo was on

like a buck. Bud went out sullenly to meet them, his black mood showing in his lowering eyes, and he halted them by the savagery of his cursing.

"You cockeyed old reprobate," he snarled, advancing threateningly upon the palling Aragon, "this makes three times you've come into my camp and brought your gun with you! Now take it off!" he yelled, dropping suddenly into Spanish. "Take that gun off—do you understand?"

So violent and unexpected was his assault that it threw Aragon into a panic, and even Manuel del Rey softened his manner as he inquired into the cause.

"Never mind," answered Bud, smiling crustily at Aragon laid aside



"Take That Gun Off, Do You Understand?"

his arms; "I know that hombre well! Now what can I do for you, captain?"

"Be so kind as to take your hand from your belt," replied Del Rey with a smile that was intended to placate.

"Ah, thank you—excuse my nerves—now I can tell you the news. I regret to inform you, señor, that your friend, De Lancey, has deserted from my command, taking his arms and equipment with him. In case he is captured he will be shot as a deserter."

"Your news is old, captain," rejoined Hooker. "I knew it two days ago. And you can tell Mr. Aragon that it is no use for him to try to get this mine—I became a Mexican citizen yesterday, and located it myself."

"So we learned," responded the captain suavely. "It was part of my errand today to ask if you would not enlist in my company of rurales."

"Muchas gracias, captain," answered Hooker with heavy irony. "I do not care to!"

"But your friend," protested Manuel del Rey with an insinuating smile.

"My friend was in jail," put in Bud; "he was to be shot at sunrise. But mira, Amigo, I am not in jail, and, furthermore, I do not intend to be."

"That is very creditable to you," laughed Del Rey; "but even then you are entitled to enlist. The country is full of turbulent fellows who have to be caught or killed. Come now, you understand my errand—why make it hard for me?"

"No, señor," returned Bud grimly, "I know nothing of your errand. But this I do know. I have done nothing for which I can be arrested, and if any man tries to make me join the army—he hooked his thumb into his belt and regarded the captain fixedly.

"Ah, very well," said Del Rey, jerking his waxed mustache. "I will not press the matter. But I understand from one of my men, señor, that you are harboring a dangerous criminal here—the same man, perhaps, whom I saw running up the canyon?"

He smiled meaningly at this, but Bud was swift to defend his Yaqui.

"No, señor," he replied, "I have no such criminal. I have a Mexican working for me who is one of the best miners in Sonora, and that is all I know about him."

"A Mexican?" repeated Del Rey, arching his eyebrows. "Excuse me, sir, but it is my business to know every man in this district, and he is no Mexican, but a Yaqui. Moreover, he is a fugitive and an outlaw, and if he had not been enlisted with the federals I should have arrested him when he passed through Fortuna. So I warn you, sir, not to hide him, or you will be liable to the law."

"I'm not hiding him," protested Hooker scornfully. "I'm just hiring him as a miner, and any time you want him you can come and get him. He's up in the rocks there somewhere now."

"So!" exclaimed the captain, glancing uneasily at the hillsides. "I did not think—but many thanks, señor, another time will do as well."

He reined his horse away as he spoke and, with a jerk of the head to Aragon, rode rapidly down the canyon. Aragon lingered to retrieve his fallen gun-belt and then, seeming to think better of his desire to speak, he made a single vindictive gesture and set spurs to his champion horse.

It was merely a fling of the hand, as spontaneous as a sigh or a frown, but in Hooker's mind the last escape orion of the Spaniard and his declaration of war to the knife. He bared his strong teeth in reply and hissed out a lightening curse, and then Aragon was gone.

That evening, as the darkness came on and the Yaqui became hushed and still, a great calm and heat settled over the harassed land, and above the far

still Bud built a big fire and stood before it, his rugged form silhouetted against the flames. And soon, as quiet as a fox, the Yaqui appeared from the gloom.

"Did he come for me?" he asked, advancing warily into the firelight, "that captain?"

"Yes," answered Bud, "and for me, too. But you must have known him before, Amigo—he seems to be afraid of you."

A smile of satisfaction passed over the swarthy face of the Indian at this, and then the fires became grim again. His eyes glowed with the light of some great purpose, and for the first time since he had been with Bud he drew aside the veil from his past.

"Yes," he said, nodding significantly, "the rural is afraid. He knows I have come to kill him."

He squatted by the fire and poured out a cup of coffee, still brooding over his thoughts—then, with a swift gesture, he laid open his shirt and pointed to a scar along the ribs.

"He shot me there," he said.

"And so you have come to kill him?"

"Yes," answered Amigo; "but not now. Tomorrow I go to my people—I must take them my money first."

"Have you got a wife?" asked Hooker, forgetting for once his accustomed reserve.

"No," grumbled Amigo, shaking his head sadly, "no wife."

"Oh, you take your money to your father and mother?"

"No. No father—no mother—nadle!"

He threw up his open hands to signify that all were gone, and Hooker said no more. For three months and more he had worked alongside this giant, silent Yaqui and only once had he sensed his past. That was when Amigo had torn his shirt in lifting, and across the rippling muscles of his back there had been shown the long white wale of a whip.

It was the mark of his former slavery, when, with the rest of his people, he had been deported to the henequen fields of Yucatan and flogged by the overseer's lash—and Amigo was ashamed of it. But now that he was about to go, Bud made bold to ask him one more question, to set his mind at rest.

"Perhaps this captain killed your people?"

"No, señor," answered Amigo quietly; "he died."

He spoke the words simply, but there was something in his voice that brought up images of the past—of peaceful Yaquis, seized at every ranch in Sonora on a certain night; of long marches overland, prodded on by rurales and guards; of the crowded prison-ships from which the most anguished hurled themselves into the sea; and then the awful years of slavery in the poisoned tropics, until only the hardest were left.

Amigo had seen it all, as the scars on his broad back proved—but he withdrew now into silence and left his thoughts unsaid. As he sat there by the fire, one long, black hand held out to keep the gleam from his eyes, he made a noble figure, but the Yaqui scents which he had crooned on other nights were forgotten, and he held himself tense and still. Then at last he rose and gazed at Bud.

"You pay me my money," he said.

"I go now."

"Sure," answered Bud, and after he had weighed out the equivalent in gold on his scales he flipped in some more for luck and gave him a sack to hold it.

"What you buy with all that?" he inquired with a friendly grin; "grub?"

"No, señor," answered Amigo, knotting the precious gold in a handkerchief; "cartridges!"

"What for?" queried Bud, and then it was Amigo who smiled.

"To kill Mexicans with!" he replied, and in those words Hooker read the secret of his thrift.

While his wild brethren fought in the hills or prepared for the battles to come, it was his part to earn the money that should keep them in ammunition. It was for that, in fact, that Porfirio Diaz had seized all the peaceful Yaquis in a night and shipped them to Yucatan—for he saw that while they were working the wild Yaquis would never lack.

All the time that Amigo had been doing two men's work and saving on the price of a shirt he had held that cheerful dream in his mind—to kill more Mexicans!

Yet, despite the savagery in him, Hooker had come to like the Yaqui, and he liked him still. With the rurales on his trail it was better that he should go, but Bud wanted him to return. So, knowing the simple honesty of Indians, he brought out his own spare pistol and placed it in Amigo's hands. Often he had seen him gazing at it longingly, for it was lighter than his heavy Mauser and better for the journey.

"Here," he said, "I will lend you my pistol—and you can give it to me when you come back."

"Sure!" answered the Indian, hanging it on his hip; "adios!"

They shook hands then, and the Yaqui disappeared in the darkness. In the morning, when a squad of rurales closed in on the camp, they found nothing but his great tracks in the dust.

## CHAPTER XIX.

blue wall of the Sierras the first thunder caps of the rainy season rose up till they obscured the sky. Then, with a rush of conflicting winds, a leaden silence, and a crash of flickering light, the storm burst in tropic fury and was gone as quickly as it had come.

So, while the rich landowners of the hot country sat idle and watched it grow, another storm gathered behind the distant Sierras; and, as empty rumors lulled them to a false security, suddenly from the north came the news of dashing raids, of railroads cut, troops routed, and the whole border occupied by swarming rebels.

In a day the southern country was isolated and cut off from escape and, while the hordes of Chihuahua Insurrectos laid siege to Agua Negra, the belated Spanish hacendados came scuttling once more to Fortuna. There, at least, was an American town where the courage of the Anglo-Saxon would protect their women in extremity. And, if worst came to worst, it was better to pay ransom to red-flag generals than to fall victims to bandits and looters.

As the bass roar of the great whistle reverberated over the hills Bud Hooker left his lonely camp almost gladly, and with his hard-won gold-dust safe beneath his belt, went galloping into town.

Not for three weeks—not since he received the wire from Phil and located the Eagle Tail mine—had he dared to leave his claim. Rurales, outlaws and Mexican patriots had dropped in from day to day and eaten up most of his food, but none of them had caught him napping, and he had no intention that they should.

A conspiracy had sprung up to get rid of him, to harry him out of the country, and behind it was Aragon. But now, with the big whistle blowing, Aragon would have other concerns.

He had his wife and daughter, the beautiful Gracia, to hurry to the town, and perhaps the thought of being caught and held for ransom would deter him from stealing mines. So reasoned Bud, and, dragging a reluctant pack-animal behind him, he came riding in for supplies.

At the store he bought flour and coffee and the other things which he needed most. As he was passing by the hotel Don Juan de Dios halted him for a moment, rushing out and thrusting a bundle of letters into his hands and hurrying back into the house, as if fearful of being detected in such an act of friendship.

Long before he had lost his partner Bud had decided that Don Juan was a trimmer, a man who tried to be all things to all people—as a good hotel-keeper should—but now he altered his opinion a little, for the letters were from Phil. He read them over in the crowded plaza, into which the first refugees were just beginning to pour, and frowned as he skimmed through the last.

Of Gracia and vain protestations of devotion there was enough and to spare, but nothing about the mine. Only in the first one, written on the very day he had deserted, did he so much as attempt an excuse for so precipitately abandoning their claim and his Mexican citizenship. Phil wrote:

My mail was being sent through headquarters and looked over by Del Rey, so I knew I would never receive the papers, even if they came. I hope you don't feel hard about it, pardner. Kruger says to come out right away. I would have stayed with it, but it wasn't any use. And now, Bud, I want to ask you something. When you come out, bring Gracia with you. Don't leave her at the mercy of Del Rey. I would come myself if it wasn't sure death. Be quick about it, Bud; I count on you.

The other letters were all like that, but nothing about the mine. And yet it was the mine that Bud was fighting for—that they had fought for from the first. The railroad was torn up now, and a flight with Gracia was hopeless, but it was just as well, for he never would abandon the Eagle Tail.

In two months, or three, when the rebels were whipped off, his papers might come. Then he could pay his taxes and transfer his title and consider the stealing of Gracia. But since he had seen her and touched her hand something held him back—a grudging reluctance—and he was glad that his duty lay elsewhere. If she was his girl now he would come down and get her anyway.

But she was not his girl and, gazing back grimly at the seething plaza and the hotel that hid her from sight, he rode soberly down the road. After all, there was nothing to get excited about—every revoltoso in the country was lined up around Agua Negra and, with four hundred soldiers to oppose them and artillery to shell their advance, it would be many a long day before they took that town.

Twice already Agua Negra had fallen before such attacks, but now it was protected by rifle-pits and machine guns set high on mud roofs. And then there were the Yaquis, still faithful to Madero. They alone could hold the town, if they made up their minds to fight. So reasoned Hooker, mulling over the news that he had heard. But he watched the ridges warily, for the weather was good for raiders.

A day passed, and then another, and the big whistle blew only for the shifts; the loneliness of the hills oppressed him as he gazed out at the quivering heat. And then, like a toad after a shower, Amigo came paddling into camp on the heels of a thunderstorm, his sandals hung on his hip and his big feet squelching through the mud.

Across his shoulders he wore a gay serape, woven by some patient woman of his tribe; and in the belt beside Bud's pistol he carried a heavy knife, blacksmithed from a ten-chin file by some Yaqui hillman. All in all, he

was a fine barbarian, but he looked good to the lonely Bud.

"Ola, Amigo!" he hailed, stepping out from the adobe house where he had moved to avoid the rains; and Amigo answered with his honest smile which carried no hint of savagery or deceit.

Try as he would, Bud could not bring himself to think of his Yaqui as dangerous; and even when he balanced the Indian's murderous bow-knife in his hands he regarded it with a grin. It was a heavy weapon, broad across the back, keen on one edge, and drawn to a point that was both sharp and strong. The haft was wrapped with rawhide, to hold the clutch of the hand.

"What do you do with this?" queried Hooker. "Chop wood? Skin deer?"

"Yes, chop wood!" answered Amigo, but he looked it carefully in his belt.

He replaced the adobe house over thoughtfully, listened to the news of the border and of the rurales' raid on their camp, and retired to the rocks for the night. Even Bud never knew where he slept—somewhere up on the hillsides—in caves or clefts in the rocks—and not even the most pressing invitation could make him share the house for a night. To Amigo, as to an animal, a house was a trap; and he knew that the times were treacherous.

So indeed they were, as Hooker was to learn to his sorrow, and but for the Yaqui and his murderous knife he might easily have learned it too late.

It was evening, after a rainless day, and Bud was cooking by the open fire, when suddenly Amigo vanished and four men rode in from above. They were armed with rifles, as befit the times, but gave no signs of raffish bravado, and after a few words Bud invited them to get down and eat.

"Muchas gracias, señor," said the leader, dismounting and laying his rifle against a log, "we are not hungry."

"Then have some coffee," invited Hooker, who made it a point to feed every one who stopped, regardless of their merit; and the four Mexicans declined. At this Bud looked at him sharply, for his refusal did not augur well, and it struck him the man's face was familiar. He was tall for a Mexican and heavily built, but with a rather sinister cast of countenance.

"Where have I seen you before?" asked Bud, after trying in vain to place him. "In Fortuna?"

"No, señor," answered the Mexican politely. "I have never been in that city. Is it far?"

"Ten miles by the trail," responded Hooker, by no means reassured, and under pretext of inviting them to eat, he took a look at the other men. If they had not stopped to eat, what then was their errand while the sun was sinking so low?—And why this sudden refusal of the coffee which every Mexican drinks?

Bud stepped into the house, as if on some errand, and watched them unseen from the interior. Seeing them exchange glances then, he leaned his rifle just inside the door and went about his cooking.

It was one of the changes he took, living out in the brush, but he had come to know this low-browed type of semi-bandit all too well—and had small respect for their courage. In case of trouble Amigo was close by in the rocks somewhere, probably with his gun in his hand—but with a little patience and circumspection the unwelcome visitors would doubtless move on.

So he thought, but instead they lingered, and when supper was cooked he decided to go to a show-down—and if they again refused to eat he would send them on their way.

"Ven amigos," he said, spreading out the tin plates for them. "Come and eat!"

The three low-brows glared at their leader, who had done what little talking there was so far, and, seized with a sudden animation, he immediately rose to his feet.

"Many thanks, señor," he said with a cringing and specious politeness. "We have come far and the trail is long, so we will eat. The times are hard for poor men now—this traitor, Madero, has made us all hungry. It is by him that we poor working men are driven to insurrection—but we know that the Americans are our friends. Yes, señor, I will take some of your beans, and thank you."

He filled a plate as he spoke and lifted a biscuit from the oven, continuing with his false patter while the others fell to in silence.